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Borough of Great Torrington

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health

AND THE

Borough Surveyor and Public Health Inspector.



For the Year ending
31st December, 1957.

Ans.

Public Health Staff.

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH :

C. F. R. BRIGGS, M.B., B.S. : L.R.C.P., M.R.C.S.

BOROUGH SURVEYOR and PUBLIC HEALTH
INSPECTOR :

P. F. R. E. SYMONS, M.R.S.H., M.A.P.H.I.

COMMITTEES :

HOUSING, SANITARY, BUILDING & IMPROVEMENTS.

WATERWORKS MANAGEMENT.

SPECIAL SEWERAGE.



COUNCIL OFFICES,
6, HALSDON TERRACE,
GREAT TORRINGTON.

Mr. Mayor, Aldermen and Councillors,

We beg to submit our Annual Report for the year ending 31st December, 1957.

Whilst submitting this report we wish to express our appreciation of the courteous manner in which our monthly reports are received and for the consideration which is given to schemes and recommendations which we bring forward. We feel that the Council is forward in its outlook and is to be congratulated on progress made since 1946, particularly with regard to the construction of the new Sewage Disposal Works, the laying of new Water Mains and the building of the new Waterworks, the construction of new Houses and Maisonettes and the introduction of the new and much improved Street Lighting.

During the year the general health of the Borough was very good. There was no major epidemic until October–November, when influenza of the so-called “Asian” type became widespread.

The corrected birth rate was 18.3 per 1,000 population. That for the whole of England and Wales was 16.1 per 1,000.

The corrected death rate was 11.9 per 1,000 population : the figure for England and Wales was 11.5 per 1,000.

We are,

Yours faithfully,

C. F. R. BRIGGS,

Medical Officer of Health.

P. F. R. E. SYMONS,

Public Health Inspector and Surveyor.

Borough of Great Torrington.

1957.

CHIEF INDUSTRIES & OCCUPATIONS.

Agricultural.
Glove-making.
Milk Factory.
Cattle Breeding Centre.

GENERAL STATISTICS.

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|--------------|
| Area (statute acres) | ... | ... | ... | ... | 3,592 |
| Mid-year Population | ... | ... | ... | ... | 2,840 |
| Number of Inhabited Houses | ... | ... | ... | ... | 967 |
| Rateable Value | ... | ... | ... | ... | £31,128 |
| Product of Penny Rate | ... | ... | ... | ... | £135 7s. 8d. |

VITAL STATISTICS.

| | | | | Male | Female | Total |
|--------------|-----|-----|-----|------|--------|-------|
| Live Births | ... | ... | ... | 21 | 25 | 46 |
| Legitimate | ... | .. | ... | 21 | 25 | 46 |
| Illegitimate | ... | ... | ... | — | — | — |
| Stillbirths | ... | ... | ... | 1 | 1 | 2 |

Comparability factor for births—1.13

| | | | England & Wales |
|--|------|--|-----------------|
| Corrected Birth Rate per 1,000 population | 18.3 | | 16.1 |
| Stillbirth Rate per 1,000 total live & stillbirths | 41.7 | | 22.4 |

The total number of births which took place in the Borough was 72 (the average for the previous 5 years was 67); but in 26 cases the parents were resident outside the Borough. There were 51 births in Torrington Cottage Hospital.

| | | | | Male | Female | Total |
|--------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|------|--------|-------|
| Deaths | ... | ... | ... | 20 | 25 | 45 |
| Comparability factor for deaths—0.75 | | | | | | |

| | | | England & Wales |
|--|------|--|-----------------|
| Corrected Death Rate per 1,000 population | 11.9 | | 11.5 |
| Deaths of Infants under 1 year per 1,000 live births | 21.7 | | 2.30 |



CAUSES OF DEATH.

| | | | | Male | Female |
|---|-----|-----|-----|------|--------|
| Coronary disease. angina | ... | ... | ... | 2 | 3 |
| Other heart disease | ... | ... | ... | 5 | 11 |
| Vascular disease of nervous system (apoplexy) | ... | ... | ... | 2 | 3 |
| Other circulatory disease | ... | ... | ... | — | 1 |
| Bronchitis | ... | ... | ... | — | 1 |
| Tuberculosis, non-pulmonary | ... | ... | ... | 1 | 1 |
| Cancer of lung | ... | ... | ... | 2 | — |
| Cancer of bowel | ... | ... | ... | — | 2 |
| Cancer of stomach | ... | ... | ... | 1 | 1 |
| Cancer of throat | ... | ... | ... | 1 | — |
| Cancer of brain | ... | ... | ... | 1 | — |
| Cancer of ovary | ... | ... | ... | — | 1 |
| Ulcer of stomach | ... | ... | ... | 1 | — |
| Kidney disease | ... | ... | ... | — | 1 |
| Disease of prostate | ... | ... | ... | 1 | — |
| Other disease | ... | ... | ... | 2 | — |
| Suicide | ... | ... | ... | 1 | — |

It will be noted that two deaths occurred from cancer of the lung. During the year much publicity on a national scale has been given to the connection between cancer of the lung and smoking. Local publicity has been given to this very vital subject by a report given at a Council meeting, the display of posters and distribution of leaflets,

AGE AT DEATH TABLE.

| Age at Death | | | | | Male | Female |
|----------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|--------|
| Under 1 year | ... | ... | ... | ... | — | 1 |
| 1—5 | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1 | — |
| 6—15 | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1 | — |
| 16—25 | ... | ... | ... | ... | — | — |
| 26—35 | ... | ... | ... | ... | — | — |
| 36—45 | ... | ... | ... | ... | 2 | — |
| 46—55 | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1 | 1 |
| 56—65 | ... | ... | ... | ... | 3 | 6 |
| 66—75 | ... | ... | ... | ... | 6 | 7 |
| 76—85 | ... | ... | ... | ... | 5 | 8 |
| 86 and over | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1 | 2 |
| Average Age at Death | ... | ... | ... | ... | 60 | 70 |

INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

There was a mild outbreak of whooping cough in February, March and April. There was no other outbreak until the beginning of October, when influenza, prevalent throughout the country, broke out in Torrington. The epidemic continued until about the middle of November; several cases of pneumonia were associated with it.

The following cases of infectious disease were notified during the year :-

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|-----|----|
| Whooping cough | ... | ... | 49 |
| Pneumonia | ... | ... | 18 |
| Dysentery | ... | ... | 13 |
| Measles | ... | ... | 12 |
| Scarlet fever | ... | ... | 6 |
| Tuberculosis, pulmonary | ... | ... | 3 |
| Tuberculosis, non-pulmonary | ... | ... | 1 |
| Erysipelas | ... | ... | 1 |
| Ophthalmia neonatorum | ... | ... | 1 |

Vaccination of school-children against poliomyelitis was started during the year, when only limited supplies of vaccine were available. Protection is offered in 1958, to all children between the ages of 6 months and 16 years, and to expectant mothers. Immunisation is also offered against the following diseases—smallpox, diphtheria, whooping cough and tetanus.

TUBERCULOSIS.

Four new cases of tuberculosis were notified during the year—3 pulmonary and 1 non-pulmonary. One of these died, a boy aged 19 months who was suffering from tuberculous meningitis. There was one other death—a woman already on the register, who died from non-pulmonary tuberculosis.

The following cases were on the register at the end of the year :-

| | | Male | Female |
|---------------|-----|------|--------|
| Pulmonary | ... | 8 | 5 |
| Non-pulmonary | ... | 4 | 2 |

VENEREAL DISEASES.

No case of venereal disease came to our notice. There are facilities for clinic treatment in Barnstaple.

CARE OF EXPECTANT MOTHERS.

There is no ante-natal clinic in Torrington. Expectant mothers receive attention from their own doctors, from the District Nurse/Midwife, and from the staff of the Cottage Hospital when necessary. Milk and orange juice are available to them at reduced prices, and free cod-liver oil or vitamin capsules. Cheap milk is provided for nursing and expectant mothers.

DOMICILIARY MIDWIFERY SERVICE AND HOME NURSING.

These services are provided by the Queen's Institute District Nurse/Midwife, resident in Torrington. She has a motor car and full midwifery and nursing equipment, including a portable gas-and-air machine and oxygen resuscitation apparatus. Apart from midwifery, a large part of the Nurse's time is devoted to the nursing of chronic sick and elderly patients: ample equipment is available for this. In addition, the Nurse will, if necessary, visit diabetic patients in their homes to give insulin injections: as well as giving other routine injections as required.

CARE OF YOUNG CHILDREN.

The Child Welfare Clinic is held fortnightly: all children up to school age may attend. Milk powder at reduced prices is provided for infants—also orange juice and cod-liver oil.

HEALTH VISITING SERVICE.

All mothers are visited in their homes, after confinement, by the County Health Visitor: the children are visited, if necessary, up to school age. Tuberculous and other patients are visited when necessary.

DOMESTIC HELP SERVICE.

There is no organised domestic help service. County grants are made towards the cost of casual domestic help in maternity and other cases, when circumstances warrant it.

AMBULANCE SERVICE.

The Devon County Ambulance, operated by the British Red Cross Society, is maintained by Heard's Garage, Torrington: all calls have been answered promptly and efficiently.

| | | |
|--------------------------|--------|--------|
| Patients carried in 1957 | ... | 328 |
| Total mileage | | 10,927 |

TORRINGTON COTTAGE HOSPITAL.

| | | |
|-------------------------------|--------|-------|
| Patients admitted during 1957 | | 208 |
| Out-patients | | 536 |
| Total Out-patient attendances | | 1,039 |
| Maternity cases | | 53 |

From the end of October the Maternity Ward at the Hospital was closed. This was due to shortage of Staff.

BLOOD DONORS.

The South Western Division of the National Blood Transfusion Service came to Torrington in November, when 89 volunteers gave blood.

Though the blood transfusion team visits Torrington only once a year, there are a number of Torringtonians who donate blood twice yearly: they volunteered in April in Bideford, when the Service visited that town.

WATER SUPPLY.

The water supply to the Town during the year has been most satisfactory. The standard has been excellent both with regard to purity and colour. As a result of frequent night testing, quantities lost through defective pipes and fittings have been kept to a minimum, and it has not been necessary to curtail supplies. No water was taken from the Water Board's main during the Summer months,

Meetings have taken place between representatives of the North Devon Water Board and the Borough Council, and after lengthy discussions and consideration it was decided that in accordance with Government policy the Council would have to become a constituent member of the Water Board. This decision was not arrived at without great opposition, particularly in view of the fact that the Council have constructed a modern treatment plant and made an emergency connection to the Water Board's main. The new treatment plant will now be idle for probably nine months in every year, and the water will cost more.

RAINFALL.

Details of rainfall in recent years are given below. For these details and the help given by C. T. Davenport, Esq., who records the rainfall, we express our thanks.

| | 1957 | 1956 | 1955 | 1954 |
|-----------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|
| January | 2.78 ins. | 4.87 | 5.00 | 2.13 |
| February | 4.71 | 0.45 | 3.86 | 4.25 |
| March | 3.43 | 0.94 | 1.08 | 2.89 |
| April | 0.29 | 1.40 | 1.52 | 0.43 |
| May | 2.35 | 0.84 | 4.25 | 2.94 |
| June | 2.42 | 1.97 | 3.34 | 3.19 |
| July | 2.73 | 3.57 | 2.18 | 4.30 |
| August | 3.21 | 3.46 | 0.30 | 2.82 |
| September | 5.00 | 5.99 | 1.72 | 4.29 |
| October | 3.87 | 2.72 | 2.67 | 4.81 |
| November | 2.36 | 1.79 | 3.12 | 7.32 |
| December | 1.90 | 3.95 | 6.77 | 3.82 |
| | <hr/> | <hr/> | <hr/> | <hr/> |
| | 35.05 | 31.95 | 35.81 | 43.19 |
| | <hr/> | <hr/> | <hr/> | <hr/> |

The month of April with a rainfall of 0.29 inches was the driest month recorded since September 1941 when 0.27 ins. was recorded.

Although the total rainfall shows an increase over 1956, daily rainfall amounts were quite small. Only on two days was there a recorded rainfall of over one inch: 1.12" on the 11th August and 1.07" on 10th September.

SEWERAGE & SEWAGE DISPOSAL.

The sewerage system in the town is now, generally, very good. Quite long lengths of old stone-built sewers are still in use but these continue to function satisfactorily. Some difficulties have been

experienced with two main sewers laid in 12" pipes at very low gradients. These sewers are not self cleansing because the diameters are too great and the gradients too little. They become silted up and there are only one or two man-holes for cleansing. This problem will be tackled by constructing further manholes as money becomes available and opportunity arises.

The pumping stations and disposal plant continue to work satisfactorily, but the problem of sludge drying is very much to the fore, particularly during the Winter months. This year a bull-dozer has been employed to construct a simple earth lagoon and it is hoped that this will temporarily solve the sludge problem.

The quantity of effluent received from the Torridge Vale Dairy increases as the growth of the dairy continues and the sewage disposal plant is now, in our opinion, operating at its maximum capacity.

HOUSING.

During the year 9 houses have been completed. This brings the total number of dwellings completed since 1946 to 111 houses and 34 maisonettes and it has been decided to suspend for the time being consideration of any further Council house construction.

The purchase of their own homes, particularly by young people, is encouraged by the Council and nine loans under the Small Dwellings Acquisition Acts and Housing Act have been made during the year.

Owners are encouraged to bring older houses up to standard by the acceptance by the Council of the principles of Section 20 of the Housing Act 1949 whereby improvement grants up to the maximum of 50% on an £800 scheme will be considered. Eight grants have been approved during the year.

STREET LIGHTING.

During the year a new system of street lighting by electricity has been brought into operation. The whole of the town is now lit by sodium discharge lighting and the standard is very high.

The number of lighting points has been increased from 115 to 144 and even the 60 watt sodium lights, the smallest lamp in use, are at least three times as powerful as the old gas lamps which they replaced.

It is estimated that the new lighting will increase the annual cost by less than $\frac{1}{2}$ d. rate.

PREVENTION OF DAMAGE BY PESTS ACT 1949.

The joint rodent control scheme by the Borough and our neighbours, the Torrington R.D.C., has continued to work very satisfactorily. The number of complaints of rats and mice is very small and when one reads of the necessity to re-employ operators in districts where rodent control schemes had been curtailed or abolished one must realise the wisdom of the decision to continue our service.

INSPECTION OF MEAT AND OTHER FOODS.

Slaughtering has been carried out regularly at the two private slaughter-houses within the Borough and Tables A and B give details of animals slaughtered, meat condemned, etc.

TABLE A

Carcases and Offal inspected and condemned in whole or in part.

| | Cattle excluding Cows | Cows | Calves | Sheep and Lambs | Pigs | Horses |
|--|-----------------------------|--------|--------|-----------------------|------|--------|
| Number killed ... | 115 | 14 | 9 | 212 | 365 | — |
| Number inspected ... | 113 | 14 | 9 | 212 | 361 | — |
| All Diseases except Tuberculosis and Cysticercosis | | | | | | |
| Whole Carcases condemned ... | 1 | — | — | 3* | — | — |
| Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned ... | 27 | 9 | — | 13 | 14 | — |
| Percentage of the number inspected affected with disease other than Tuberculosis & Cysticercosis | 24.78 | 64.28† | — | 7.55 | 3.88 | — |
| Tuberculosis only | | | | | | |
| Whole carcasses condemned ... | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned ... | — | — | — | — | 12 | — |
| Percentage of the number inspected affected with Tuberculosis ... | — | — | — | — | 3.32 | — |
| Cysticercosis | | | | | | |
| Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned ... | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Carcases submitted to treatment by refrigeration | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Generalised and totally condemned ... | — | — | — | — | — | — |

* All "Emergency Slaughter" or "Casualty" cases.

† Only the livers, either in whole or in part, of these animals were condemned.

TABLE B.

Summary of Meat condemned with cause and weight.

| Part of Organ Condemned | Cause | Weight in lbs. |
|---|---|-------------------|
| 1 Bullock Carcase and Offal complete | Pericarditis, Septicaemia and Sarcoma ... | 650 lbs. |
| 1 Beast's Head ... | Actino ... | 27 lbs. |
| 16 Beasts' Livers ... | 12 Cirrhosis, 3 Abscesses 1 Angioma ... | 153 lbs. |
| 10 Part Beasts' Livers ... | Distomatosis ... | 53 lbs. |
| 4 Cows' Livers ... | Cirrhosis ... | 38 lbs. |
| 4 Part Cows' Livers ... | 3 Distomatosis, 1 Abscesses | 17 lbs. |
| 3 Sheep and Lamb Carcases and Offal ... | All "Emergency" slaughter. Fevered & badly bled | 136 lbs. |
| 1 Sheep and 1 Lamb's Plucks ... | Pneumonia, "emergency" slaughter ... | 7 lbs. |
| 8 Sheep and Lambs' Livers ... | 6 Distomatosis, 1 Cystic, 1 "Fatty" | 15 lbs. |
| 2 Part Sheeps' Livers ... | Distomatosis ... | 2 lbs. |
| 2 Sheeps' Kidneys ... | Cystic ... | $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. |
| 12 Pigs' Heads ... | Tuberculosis ... | 115 lbs. |
| 1 Pig's Skin ... | Urticaria ... | 4 lbs. |
| 2 Pigs' Plucks ... | Pneumonia ... | 8 lbs. |
| 10 Pigs' Livers ... | 7 Cirrhosis, 3 Cystic ... | 37 lbs. |
| 1 Pig's Kidney ... | Retention cysts ... | $\frac{3}{8}$ lb. |

TABLE C.

Details of other foodstuffs condemned during the year.

| Food | Reasons for Condemnation | Weights |
|--------------------------|---|---------------------|
| 3 Tins Luncheon Meat ... | Tins damaged & punctured in transit ... | 12 lbs. |
| 2 Tins Corned Beef ... | Tins blown, meat putrefactive ... | 12 lbs. |
| 1 Tin Ox Tongue ... | Tin blown ... | 2 lbs. |
| 12 Tins Crab ... | Tins blown ... | 2 lbs. 10 ozs. |
| 1 Tin Salmon ... | Tin blown ... | $3\frac{3}{4}$ ozs. |

SALE OF ICE CREAM.

No Ice-Cream is manufactured within the Borough. All premises retailing pre-packed ice-cream are registered and have been inspected.

SUMMARY OF VISITS & INSPECTIONS MADE DURING THE YEAR.

| | | | | |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-------------|
| Housing | ... | ... | ... | 211 |
| Improvement Grants | ... | ... | ... | 53 |
| Plans, Planning & Building Inspection | ... | | | 52 |
| Drains, including Inspection and Testing | ... | | | 20 |
| Meat Inspection | ... | .. | ... | 307 |
| Food Premises and Bakehouses | ... | | ... | 11 |
| Food Condemnation | ... | ... | ... | 3 |
| Milk Retailers and Dairies | ... | | ... | 6 |
| Ice-cream Retailers | ... | ... | ... | 7 |
| Sewers & Sewage Disposal (incl. Pumping Stations) | | | | 176 |
| Refuse Collection and Disposal | ... | | ... | 5 |
| Water | ... | ... | ... | 285 |
| Cattle and Pannier Markets | ... | | ... | 45 |
| Inspections under Petroleum Acts | | | ... | 8 |
| Cemetery | ... | ... | ... | 83 |
| Infectious Diseases, Disinfection of Room | ... | | | 1 |
| Nuisances | ... | ... | ... | 15 |
| Rodent Control | ... | ... | ... | 2 |
| Playing Field | ... | ... | ... | 11 |
| Public Conveniences | ... | ... | ... | 9 |
| Allotments | ... | ... | ... | 16 |
| Miscellaneous | ... | ... | ... | 59 |
| | | | | Total 1,385 |

K. Bowden, Printer, Torrington.





